

The Crusades: Crescent & the Cross

Understanding Primary Sources

The Crusades marked an era of violence, discontent and religious fervor. However, the Christians and the Muslims did not always agree within their own ranks. Many Christians did not like violent massacres and it took the Muslims hundreds of years to unite under Saladin's reign. Read the following passage written by a Christian chronicler and answer the questions below in well-written paragraphs.

For the Knights of the Templ[ar] with the pope's approval claim for themselves the administration of churches, they occupy them through surrogates, and they whose normal occupation it is to shed human blood in a certain way presume to administer the blood of Christ. Not of course that I would call those – almost alone men – who wage legitimate war 'men of blood', since even David was called a man of blood not because he engaged in wars which were legitimate but on account of Uriah, whose blood he criminally shed. For as is provided by the canons, none of the power of the ecclesiastical sphere may be seen to be ascribed by laymen, even if they are religious men. Above all it would be a sign of true religion if they refrained from the administration of those things which by God's prohibition it is not permitted for them to touch.

Still it is entirely wicked that, enticed by the love of money, they open churches which were closed by bishops. They travel around to churches, they praise the merits of their own Orders, they bring absolution for crimes and sometimes they preach a new gospel, falsifying the word of God because they preach living not by grace but by a price, by pleasure and not by truth. And in the end, when they convene in their lairs late at night, 'after speaking of virtue by day they shake their hips in nocturnal folly and exertion'. If one moves in this fashion towards Christ, then the doctrine of the Fathers which teaches that the narrow and steep path heads towards the true life of man is false and vain.

-Christian Chronicler 1159

1. What is the chronicler saying in his passage above?
2. What does internal strife and disagreement symbolize? What was the status of the Crusades in 1159? Do similarities exist between this passage and the situation at the time?
3. Compare and contrast this Christian writing to the internal strife that plagued the Muslims before Saladin could unite them. Is this internal Christian writing more or less severe than the internal problems of the Muslims. **There can be more than one correct answer, so long as they are supported properly.*
4. Do you think this Chronicler's opinion was passed up the Crusader chain of command or was it just a personal reflection? Explain your reasoning.
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5. Does a Jihad or Crusade justify actions that may be ordinarily condemned? Do you agree with the author of this passage that Christian violence is not acceptable?
6. Can you compare this internal crevasse with political problems today? How does the media expose these types of views and question today's leaders? Did public scrutiny

exist during the Crusades? Explain.

7. The United States currently faces a staunch enemy in Al Qaeda in the Middle East. Is Al Qaeda's self-declared Jihad equivalent to the Christian-led Crusades? How has social order and acceptability influenced the way of life in the modern world relative to the 11th and 12th centuries?